



MEDIA ADVISORY World Water Day 2019

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Its Hip to Fix a Drip! Final Report of Five-Year Cowichan Water Conservation Challenge

- WHO** Cowichan Watershed Board
- WHAT** Final report of the five-year Cowichan Water Conservation Challenge, 2014-2018.
- WHEN** Friday March 22nd 2019, UN World Water Day
- WHERE** The final report will be published on the CWB website at www.cowichanwatershedboard.ca

In July 2014, in response to extreme summer droughts, a growing population, and concerns about water shortages and sustainability, the Cowichan Watershed Board issued a challenge to all local water suppliers to “meet or beat” Ladysmith’s domestic water use level at that time -- 246 litres per person per day. The Ladysmith target represented a more than 20% improvement in one decade, and well below the Canadian average at that time. It provided clear evidence that local residents could do better without impacting our quality of life. The seven largest water suppliers at the time took up the Challenge.

Due to difficulties comparing one water system to another, adjustments were made to the goal in year two and each water system was asked instead to aim for a 20% reduction in per capita residential water use from its 2013 levels rather than a specific volume of water. While one water provider, Cowichan Bay Waterworks District, did reach that goal, and other districts surpassed the 20% reduction goal in some years, overall we have a long way to go.

While the trend is improving, at approximately 8.6% less residential water use per person per day on average than in 2013, Cowichan Valley residents still use more water in our homes than the Canadian average of 251 Litres per person per day (LPD)¹, and Canadians are among the highest water consumers in the world.

However, the Challenge revealed a great interest and willingness among residents to “fix a drip” and conserve water. Approximately 2000 people directly engaged in a water conservation activity with the Watershed Board during this time, such as testing a toilet or garden hose for leaks or pledging to let their lawns go dormant in summer, saving an estimated 10 million litres of water. (Details next page)

¹ Environment Canada 2011 statistic. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/residential-water-use.html>

COWICHAN WATER CHALLENGE RESULTS 2014-2018

Water Supplier	Residential Water Use in Litres per person per day (LPD)						Average % Change*
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2013-2018
North Cowichan	296	283	265	245	283	318	-5.70%
Mill Bay	249	265	227	243	240	252	-1.60%
Cow Bay	307	240	213	211	223	232	-22.80%
CVRD	415	410	370	387		376	-6.90%
Ladysmith	231	235	213	220	189	233	-5.90%
Average	300	287	258	261	234	282	-8.60%

*Average of year-to-year changes from the 2013 (pre-Challenge) baseline.

Note that data was not received from City of Duncan or Town of Lake Cowichan but both participated in other ways. Cowichan Tribes was an education participant in the Challenge but is not a water supplier.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Water Woman and Leaky Loos

- 500 people took a pledge to save water in various ways in 2014-2015
- 150 residents were provided with toilet leak detection kits, in exchange for a pledge that they would check their homes for leaky toilets.

Capture the Rain

- 495 high school students learned about the importance of storing more winter water for summer use, and how to calculate the rainwater harvesting potential of their own home or school.
- 5 local home or business owners were profiled for their innovative rainwater capture methods
- 2 Rainwater Harvesting and 3 Micro-drip workshops were offered

Know your Flow

- 314 elementary students were led through a one-hour session with “Watershed Ed” in 2018 to identify their home water source. After learning about their water sources, the elementary students received a certificate and encouragement to take it home to teach their families about their home water source.

Million Litre Challenge March 2018

- An estimated 3.8 million litres of water was saved during Water Week in March 2018. The Million Litre Challenge engaged 132 people in setting up their summer watering hoses properly to avoid leaks all summer long. An estimated 28,800 litres of water is saved by changing the washer of a leaky hose, and/or tightening hose connections with a wrench.

Cowichan Hosers 2017-2018

- 7.6 million litres of water was prevented from being wasted by the 264 people engaged by the “Cowichan Hosers” between 2017-2018. A hose washer “necklace” and follow-up phone calls were used to confirm whether the hoses had been tightened up.